Dr *WILLIAMS*'s FIFTH SERMON AT Mr. BOYLE'S Lecture, 1695.

IMPRIMATUR,

May 1. 1695.

Guil. Lancaſter.

The Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *Martin's in the Fields*, May 4. 1695.

BEING THE

Fifth of the LECTURE

For this present YEAR,

Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, Esquire.

By *JOHN WILLIAMS*, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

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Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN theſe words, there is contained (as I have before ſhewed)

1. A deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*.

2. The Certainty of it, 'tis by way of declaration, *God who at ſundry times*, &c. 'Tis taken for granted.

3. The Order obſerved in delivering this Revelation, it was *at ſundry times, and in divers manners*, &c.

4. The Perfection and Concluſion of all, 'tis in *theſe laſt days by his Son*.

Under the Second I have ſhewed,

1. That God has actually revealed his Will *at ſundry times, and in divers manners*.

2. What are the Characters of true Revelation.

3. I am now in order to prove that the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Teſtament* do contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

In which there are two things to be conſidered.

1. The Matter contained in Scripture.

2. The Books containing that Matter.

Which two will admit of a diſtinct Conſideration. For,

(1.) Theſe two, the Matter and the Books, were originally diſtinct; for the Matter was revealed before it was written, and would have been of the ſame Authority, if unwritten, as written. The writing not being eſſential to the Authority, but only made uſe of as a fit means for the conveyance and preſervation of the Matter.

(2.) Theſe two are capable of a different proof: For the matter of Scripture was confirmed by Miracles, and had a Divine Atteſtation given to it: But we don't find the like Teſtimony given to the Books. There were Miracles upon Miracles, to confirm the truth, ſuppoſe, contained in the

Four

Four Evangelists; but none to prove those four Gospels to be wrote by Persons inspired, or that these were the Books wrote by them. For that has another sort of Evidence, to be hereafter inquired into.

2. 'Tis fit these two should be considered apart. For,

(1.) If we were to discourse with a professed Infidel, we must begin with the Truth of the Matter, and then proceed to the Authority of the Books: And we may make Converts (as the Apostles and others in those primitive times did) from the proof we are able to make of the Truth and Authority of our Religion, though at the present we have not the Books.

(2.) It's of no little advantage. For by handling the Matter apart from the Books, we need not for the present concern our selves in the Doubts and Objections about the Books; such as the supposed Inconsistencies in Scripture; the various Readings; the uncertainty of the Authors; the Subject of Inspiration, whether words as well as matter, *&c.*

These being laid aside for the present, by this distinct consideration of the Matter and the Books, will shorten our Work; and if we prove the

the matter to be of Divine original, we also gain a great point toward the proof of the Books themselves.

I am to begin with the Matter contained in Scripture.

Now that is of a diverse nature, and therefore according to the nature of it, so is its Authority. For there is matter of Fact, and Historical Relations of things; and when we say these are of Divine Authority, we thereby mean they were recorded and committed to writing by the Appointment, Direction or Command of God. Again, there are Matters of a moral nature, which might be found out by, and are the Dictates of pure Reason; and when we say these are of Divine Authority, we thereby understand that they are authorised by the Divine Command, as well as in their own nature obligatory. In which cases *holy men of God spake*, and wrote, *as they were moved*, incited, *by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. 1. 21.

But the more especial way was when the Matter was purely of Divine Revelation, and wholly proceeding from it; and though this were not to be learned, and found out by Reason (as has been before shewed) yet 'tis agreeable to it; as I shall now proceed to prove; and that I shall do in this order.

1. I

1. I ſhall conſider, The Claim which the Matter of Scripture hath to Revelation and Inſpiration.

2. The Characters upon which that Claim is grounded.

3. The Proof by which that Claim to Revelation is made good.

1. I ſhall conſider the Claim, *&c.* And that is, If the Matter contained in the Scripture be not a Revelation from God, and the True Revelation, then there neither is, nor ever was, nor can be ſuch a Revelation.

1. If That be not a Divine Revelation, there is no Revelation; for as That denies and rejects all Revelation beſides it ſelf, ſo there is none other that can produce ſuch Evidence for it. And conſequently, if notwithſtanding the Evidence producible for Scripture, That is not to be admitted for Divine, then there is no Revelation exiſtent in the World, ſince no other has the Evidence which That appears to have. This we may leave to any indifferent perſon to judge of, by comparing the *Alcoran* with the *Bible*; and the *Chineſe* Divinity of a *Confutius*, with that of Chriſtianity.

2. If this be not a Revelation from God, then there never has been ſuch a Revelation; and

that for the Reaſon before given, *viz.* That there is no other Revelation extant ſave this. But if there ever had been a Revelation, and a Revelation deſign'd for all Mankind (as that of the Goſpel apparently is), what was once, would always and for ever afterwards have been exiſtent; ſince the ſame reaſon there was once for a Revelation to Mankind, the ſame would have been for the Continuance of it; and the ſame Divine Goodneſs that took care there ſhould be a Revelation, would certainly have taken the like care for the preſerving of it. But if there be no Revelation, (as there is not, if the Scripture be not that Revelation) then there never was a Revelation; and ſo all that has been before ſaid upon this Argument, about the Exiſtence, Uſefulneſs, and Neceſſity of a Revelation, muſt go for nothing.

3. If the Scripture be not of Divine Revelation, then there never can be a Revelation, or at leaſt, ſuch a Revelation as ſhall oblige us to receive and believe it: Since there can be no ſtronger Evidence produced for the Proof of it, than there is for that of Scripture. And therefore he that will pretend not to believe the Scripture-Revelation for want of ſufficient Evidence, can never be convinced of the Truth of any Revelation.

tion. For what better Evidence can be given, as to the Matter, the Perſons Inſpired, the Supernatural Proofs of Miracles and Prophecy, *&c.* than what we have for the Scripture?

Admit then that there is, or ever was, or may be a Divine Revelation, we may be certain that the Matter contained in Scripture is of that nature.

But though this muſt be allowed to be a good ſtep toward the Proof of the Divine Authority of Scripture; yet it remains to conſider what that Evidence is which is thus peculiar to Scripture-Revelation, and that none beſides ever have or can have: And this is the Subject of the Second General:

Which is to conſider,

2. The Characters belonging to Revelation, upon which that Claim is grounded.

That Revelation may be diſtinguiſhed from Impoſture and mere Pretence, there muſt be proper Characters that are eſſential to Revelation; without which Marks of diſtinction, we muſt do by it as few have done, and totally reject it; or elſe as the *Romans* did by the Deities of other Countries, that admitted all into their *Calendar*, we muſt refuſe none. But ſince there has been

a Revelation (as all Mankind have been inclined to believe), and several Pretences to it (as the experience of all Ages has shewed), we must
2 Pet. 2. 21. follow the direction of Scripture, which not only warns us of *false Prophets*,
1 Joh. 4. 1, &c. and exhorts us to *try the Spirits*; but doth also furnish us with such Characters, as will enable us to distinguish the true from the false.

And this direction, methinks, may pass for one Character, according to that of our Saviour, Joh. 3. 20, 21. *Every one that doth evil*, or speaketh falsly, *hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reproved*, and his Pretences discovered. *But he that doeth* and speaketh *truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God*; or that what he saith, may appear to be a Revelation from him.

Now when the Revelation so called doth thus offer it self to an impartial trial, and exhorts and requires all persons to examine and make enquiry, and lays down such Rules, Principles, and Characters, as in the opinion of all men are sufficient to distinguish the true from the false, 'tis an undoubted sign that it is able to justify it self, and to make out its Claim to a Divine Authority, by a correspondence to those Characters.

By

By this the Scripture is distinguished from all others; for though there were several among the *Heathen* Lawgivers that pretended to derive their Laws from the direction of their gods, yet it was rather to prevent Enquiry, than encourage it; and to oblige the people to an absolute submission: For who might dispute that which the gods commanded? Or who durst so much as enquire, where the *Fear of Religion* restrained them? Justin. Hist. l. 3.

But to expose it self to a trial, and to require that men examine before they receive and believe, and to give them such signs as shall serve to describe the Truth, and detect Imposture, is peculiar to the Scripture. From thence therefore it is that I shall produce such Characters as will give that a Title to Divine Authority, and oblige us to a belief of it. And what are such, if these are not? *viz.* That it could come only from God, is worthy of him, and has a Divine and Supernatural Evidence to attest it. Where these are, there is a Divine Authority, there is a Revelation. And these I shall shew do belong to what the Scripture proposes as such.

1. It is a Character belonging to Revelation, and a sign of the Truth of it, when it apparently has God for the Author, and can proceed from none but him. This is a Character, I presume, will

will upon examination be found to belong to Scripture.

As I ſhall now attempt to prove, by conſidering that which is the chief ſubject of it; and that is the Revelation of God's Will to Mankind.

Here I ſhall premiſe and take for granted,

1. That God having created Man, created him in a ſtate of Innocency and Purity; for being infinitely Good, it is not to be conceived that he made any thing evil in it ſelf.

2. That Man fell from this happy ſtate; of innocent he became guilty; of a pure, he became a depraved creature, as the experience of all Ages ſhews him now to be.

3. That Almighty God was diſpoſed to pardon and admit him again to favour.

Upon this ſtate of things the Scripture proceeds: And becauſe it was impoſſible for Man to find out of himſelf the way and means by which he might be reſtored, there needed a Revelation to inform him in it.

I grant there is a Natural Means, and what the reaſon of the thing ſuppoſes to be neceſſary to our Reconciliation, and that is Repentance.

But that this is of it ſelf a Means ſufficient, and upon which alone God will be reconciled to the Offenders, has been always doubted of; as is evi-

evident from the several ways of Atonement, and especially of Sacrifices, practised in all parts of the world. For since God is the Governor of the world, it seems no more reconcilable with his Justice, and consistent with that Authority he is to maintain, to pardon all Offenders upon Repentance, than it is consistent with the ends of Government among men, to accept of the Offenders Penitence as a full Satisfaction to the Law, and to remit the Penalty threatned.

We have an Instance to the contrary, in this very case; when notwithstanding a supposed Repentance in Mankind, God inflicted the Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt dye.* Now therefore, since the natural Means of propitiating Almighty God was not sufficient, there is somewhat further in reserve; and what that is, none could tell, but he who had it in his own power what to accept, and what to refuse; it was for him to reveal, that was to institute.

And if we take a view of the Scheme of what the Scripture sets before us as to this matter, it will abundantly confirm what I have proposed as a Character of Revelation, and that is, That it is from God, and only from him.

The Sum of which is, That since Mankind had thus lapsed into a Preternatural State, in which through

through the Infirmity and Corruption of their Nature, they themselves neither were, nor could do what was acceptable to God in order to a Restitution and Reconciliation, it was designed that the Son of God himself should become a Mediator by a present Stipulation, and in a prefixed time, by an actual Undertaking to dye for us. That accordingly, in testimony of God's acceptance of the Atonement, and of his Reconciliation, the Son rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, is there our Intercessor, and the Dispenser of all those Gifts, and that supervenient Grace which is necessary to the reforming Mankind, and the fitting them for that state he is now invested in, and has promised to bestow upon such as are qualified for it.

Now who is there, that upon a Review of these several Particulars that do constitute the Christian Religion, and make up the chief Subject of Scriptural Revelation, can pretend that this was to be found out by Human Consideration and Enquiry; or rather, that must not grant it proceeded from God? Especially if it be observed what a wonderful Intermixture there is in this Scheme, of the Divine Mercy and Justice; of his Mercy in pardoning the Sinner, and of his Justice in requiring an Atonement.

What

What a repreſentation of his Hatred to Sin on one hand, when God eſtabliſhed ſo valuable an Atonement as the Blood of his own Son; and of his Favour and Love to Mankind, when *he ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?* What a foundation for our Hope on one hand, when he accepted of the Propitiation; and what a dread of offending is there on the other, when *he that knew no ſin, was made a ſin-offering for us?*

All which laid together, do confirm the Truth of this Character, and the Title that the Scripture-Revelation hath to it.

But there is ſomewhat further to be added in Proof of this Point, That it was a Revelation from God; and that is, The many Prophecies that are interwoven with it in Scripture; which could proceed from none but Him who alone has all Cauſes and Events in his Power, and ſo alone could foretell how thoſe Cauſes would operate, and what ſhould be the Events of ſuch Operation. Theſe being the chief part of the Revelation concerning the whole Scheme of Man's Salvation, confirm what I have before ſaid, That it was from God, and from Him alone. But this muſt be reſerved to its proper place, under the Third General Head.

To go on,

II. A Character neceſſarily belonging to Divine Revelation, is, That it be worthy of God, and what becomes the Majeſty of Heaven to make known to Mankind.

When we ſay it is to be worthy of him, thereby is meant, that it is ſuitable to the Perfections of his Nature, to his Holineſs and Juſtice, his Goodneſs and Mercy, his Wiſdom and Power, *&c.* To which, and all of which, a Revelation truly ſo, can no more be repugnant, than God himſelf can be other than he is, and deſtitute of thoſe Perfections which are eſſential to him.

In diſcourſing upon which, we may obſerve,

1. That it cannot be denied, but the Revelation of himſelf to Mankind is worthy of God, though it be an Infinite Condeſcenſion.

It was an Infinite Condeſcenſion in the Deity, that had all in himſelf, to make ſuch a Creature as Man; and it is no more unworthy of God to reveal himſelf to him, than it was to make him. For what other reaſon was there for the making ſuch a Creature, and the enduing him with the Light of Reaſon, but that he might own, honour, and ſerve the Author of his Being? And ſince to know and acknowledge God, is the chief

chief end for which Man was made, it is as much becoming Almighty God to reveal himſelf to him, as it was to make him for the knowledge of himſelf.

2. That is a thing worthy of God to reveal, which is a thing worthy of God to do: And ſuch is the Recovery and Reſtoration of Man to the like condition he was created in, and unhappily fell from; for that is a kind of Re-making him, and giving him a New Being: And ſince a New Being is to a Depraved Being, what Being was to No Being, it is as much becoming Almighty God from a depraved ſtate to raiſe him to a ſtate of Purity and Holineſs, as it was at the firſt to give Him a Being that before had none.

And this is the great Subject of what we call Divine Revelation; which as it reſpects Man, may come under a Twofold Conſideration; and that is, the Perfection of Human Nature, and the Happineſs of Mankind.

It will be a needleſs undertaking, to prove that theſe Ends are worthy of God; but that which rather becomes us is to ſhew, That as it is the great deſign of the Scriptural Revelation to repreſent this, and to acquaint us with the Method that the Almighty Wiſdom and Goodneſs thought fit to obſerve; ſo the Method as there

laid down, is worthy of such Wisdom and Goodness, as I shall now proceed to shew in the two Instances given.

1*st*. The Method Almighty God is in Scripture said to take for the purifying and the perfecting Human Nature, is highly worthy of so glorious a Being; and that is Threefold, Cautionary, Moral, and Supernatural.

(1.) That which I call Cautionary, is the way Almighty God was pleased to take for the representing his Displeasure against Sin, and to make Mankind cautious of offending. The Means made use of before the Fall was a Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt dye*. But because that had proved of so little force to restrain mankind, and for fear lest when God had received them into Favour after such a Threatning, his Mercy and Indulgence might be abused, and become an Encouragement to Sin, God added thereunto an Expiation (as has been before said), and that to be made by his own Son; who from the Dignity of his Person, and the voluntary Oblation of himself, should be reputed as a Representative of the whole, and the whole be esteemed to suffer with him. By which means, as God's Mercy would be abundantly testified in a design for redeeming them;

them; ſo his Juſtice would be exemplified, when he that had no ſin of his own, ſhould yet be made a Sin-offering, and ſuffer for them. For how could they preſume after this to offend the Almighty Father, when rather than ſuffer his Laws to be violated, his Authority ſlighted, his Holineſs and Juſtice diſparaged, or leave Mankind under a temptation ſo to do, he would expreſs his hatred againſt ſin, and his reſolution to puniſh it, by requiring and ſubſtituting ſuch a Sacrifice as that of his Son in their ſtead? This is the apparent Reaſon of ſuch an Inſtitution; and both the Inſtitution and Reaſon of it are worthy of the Divine Counſel; ſince there is no way in which theſe things can be repreſented to greater advantage, than by the Scripture-Scheme of Man's Redemption.

(2.) There is the Moral Means, that ſerves the ſame end, *viz.* the purifying and perfecting Human Nature, to which Revelation gave the laſt and finiſhing hand. It is true, theſe Moral Principles are no other than Natural Maxims, and which were Nature, unaſſiſted, ſufficient for, might have been extracted out of it. But Mankind were no more able to attain to that skill of themſelves, than an unexperienced perſon, and unacquainted with the Art of Chymiſtry,

ſtry, can extract ſuch Exalted and Generous Spirits out of the Bodies of Plants and Animals, as upon trial we find they are endued with. It is another Light we view Nature by ſince the communicating of the Evangelical Revelation to the world. Nature and Reaſon now, are not the Nature and the Reaſon they were before, or are ſtill where that Revelation has not been known: And therefore if we would know what the force of thoſe Principles are, and how far they operated by their own power, and of themſelves, the way is not to judge of it as it appears to us, where the Goſpel-Revelation is, but as it was in the ſtate of pure *Heatheniſm*, not excepting the finer part of it (as it flouriſhed in *Greece* it ſelf) and as it is now in ſome of the remote parts of the world, as in the *Weſt-Indies*, &c. For *Gentiliſm* it ſelf apparently mended upon the Publication of the Goſpel; and then their *Moraliſts* wrote with another ſtrein, than thoſe of their own Sect did before that time.

For in the Scripture there is ſuch an entire and compleat Syſtem of all things requiſite to the perfection of Human Nature (as far as in this ſtate it is capable of it) that nothing is wanting for direction and obligation.

There we find the moſt Natural Characters of

of Good and Evil traced along from the firſt riſe in all their tendencies, and the juſt bounds of both deſcribed. There we have on one hand the moſt enforcing Encouragements to Virtue and Goodneſs, and on the other the moſt neceſſary Cautions and Admonitions againſt Sin; and both fortified with proper Inſtances and Examples.

There we find the nobleſt Principles, and exacteſt Rules; and the great Lines of our Duty plainly ſet forth in their utmoſt extent; and that as well for the Regulation of the Thoughts and Deſires, as the Government of our Actions.

There we find that Duty enforced by the higheſt Obligation, by no leſs Authority than that of God himſelf, whoſe Precepts and Injunctions they are declared to be, and not the mere reſults of our own Nature and Reaſon.

And whereas Nature falls as ſhort in its Sanctions (having only Conſcience to enforce them) as its Authority; when theſe Moral Principles become God's Laws, they have Rewards and Puniſhments of another kind annexed to them, and as everlaſting as our Souls, to bind them upon us.

So that as far as Nature thus directed and excited can go, we have the moſt effectual means in our power for the amendment and purification of it.

But

But becauſe it is only ſo far in our own power, and that in the iſſue we prove too remiſs in the exerting of it; and that after all, Nature flags and recoils, and is too much Nature ſtill. Therefore,

(3.) There is a Supernatural Means to render the other effectual, and to give encouragement and ſucceſs to our endeavours; and that is a Power as Divine as the Authority, which is the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit of God. Look we upon the Morality of the greateſt Philoſophers, how poor is that to the Doctrine of our Saviour and the Apoſtles? Look we upon the fruits of it, and there we ſhall find them ſhort of their Principles; and that the caſe was much with them as with the Stoical *Poſidonius*, that would not allow Paſſions in Human Nature; that when invaded by the Gout, might chide both that and himſelf for his ſenſation of it; but the Diſeaſe and Nature, kept on their courſe, and would own no ſuch Authority. So it was with them that had only Nature to correct Nature; that while they pretended to be the Phyſicians of it, could not cure themſelves, nor alter ſo much as Cuſtom, which had alter'd that.

The Inſtances they give of a Philoſophical Cure, are as rare as the Miracles they pretend to have

have been wrought in the Temple of *Æsculapius*, or by a *Vespasian*; few and questionable; a *Phædon*, or a *Polemon*, to credit the Schools of a *Socrates* or a *Xenocrates*. But the Instances of such as were converted by our Saviour and Apostolical Persons, were like his Miracles, numberless, and not to be disputed. When the Gospel flew like Lightning through the earth, and became as successful in reforming, as teaching the world; Nature by it was changed, and the Temper became subject to the Divine Power. So that the Doctrine of Christ *did turn those that were immersed in wickedness, to a life agreeable to Reason, and the practice of all Virtue*; as *Origen* shews, and appeals to his Adversary in. Contr. Cels. l. 1, & 2.

And what was then done, would always be done, if there were not some obstruction on our part, either as to asking that Assistance, or in the not improving it; according to that of our Saviour, *Matth.* 13. 12. *Whosoever hath* and useth it, *to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.*

2*dly*. It is worthy of God, and becoming the most Benevolent as well as the most powerful of Beings, to consult what may be for the happiness of the reasonable Nature, and to propound this as an encouragement to them in the Performance of that Service he expects and requires of them.

And what can make them happy, if the Order and Method of Salvation revealed in Scripture be not ſufficient for it? Whereby they are not only aſſured of the Protection and Bleſſing of Divine Providence in this Life, but alſo of a State of Immortality in the Life to come: Where they ſhall be taken into the Enjoyment of their Ever-bleſſed Creator; and be fitted both in Body and Soul, by the Divine Power, for ſuch a Participation.

To which I may add, That it is as worthy of God to reveal the Way by which that Happineſs is to be attained. I grant that by the uſe and power of Reaſon, and the ſenſe we have of the difference between Good and Evil, we may learn, though obſcurely and very imperfectly, what is acceptable to God: But yet without Revelation we are much in the dark, and can as little know what is on our part neceſſary toward the attainment of that Happineſs, as we do what the Condition of the Future State is, and wherein the Happineſs of it conſiſts.

There is as much difference between what is only ſuppoſed, and what is neceſſary, as there is between what we hope for, and what is certain. And therefore, as there needs a Revelation to aſſure us of that which without Revelation we only

ly hoped for; ſo there is as much need of Revelation to inform us of what is neceſſary to our Acceptance with God, and to our Happineſs in another world; and without which we are left to Conjecture only. So that as far as Certainty is to be preferr'd beyond Hope and Imagination; and the Knowledge of what is neceſſary, is beyond Conjecture; ſo much is the Comfort of Revelation beyond that of Nature; and ſo much is it becoming Almighty God, who gave us our Nature and Being, to acquaint us with what may both make us happy, and lead us to it. Eſpecially was this neceſſary, conſidering how far the World had wandred out of the right way; and what ſuperſtitious and infamous Rites had been taken up; and what Practices diſhonourable to the Deity and Human Nature, had been uſed. And this way to Happineſs the Scripture has plainly reveal'd.

3*dly*. It is a Deſign worthy of God, to reveal Himſelf to the World, and to give Mankind a right Notion and Repreſentation of his Nature. The Being of God, is what the whole Creation proclaims; and there are ſome Attributes of his lye open to all, and are conſpicuous in their effects, ſuch are his Wiſdom and Power. But there are others that we rather know by Inference, and need a farther and brighter Light to

inform us in; and such are his Goodness and his Mercy. And since these are as essential Perfections of the Deity as the other, and exceed them in the influence they have upon mankind, as to our Love and Adoration of him; and yet are not so legible in the Frame of Nature, nor so observable in the Course of his Providence as the other; we cannot conceive but that it is as becoming our Creator to represent himself to be a God Gracious and Merciful in a Revelation to Mankind, as to be a God Great, Powerful, and Wise in the Creation. We see how confused the *Gentile* World was in their Notion of the Supreme Power; how inconsistently they thought, and how low their Representations were of the Deity: And at best they had a very imperfect Notion of those Divine Attributes of Love and Goodness, of Pity and Compassion, of Indulgence and Condescension, of Patience and Forbearance, of Mercy and Forgiveness, which the Scripture represents with Life and Perspicuity.

There it is that we find the Almighty Creator stooping to the Creature, condescending to their Condition, bearing with their Infirmities, pitying their Miseries, forgiving their Sins. There we find him reproving, arguing, following Sinners with importunity, and leaving nothing undone,

done, that was consistent with his Nature and Honour to do, toward the Salvation of Mankind. And above all, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*, 1 Joh. 4. 9.

So that if to reveal what was not otherwise to be known, concerning God's Reconciliation to Mankind, and the Terms upon which he is reconciled; if to restore Man to the state he is fallen from, and to promote him to a state of Purity, Perfection, and Happiness; if for God to reveal and to render himself acceptable to mankind by the most obliging Characters of Love and Favour, be worthy of him; lastly, If to reveal what is most worthy of God, be a Character of Revelation, Then the Scripture is such, and what is therein contained must be from God.

III. A Character necessarily belonging to Revelation, and by which the True is to be distinguished from the False and Pretended, is a Divine and Supernatural Evidence; which is the same with the Third General Head, *viz.* The Proof by which the Scripture's Claim to Divine Revelation is to be made good; and that is next to be considered. Now

Now there are Three Instances of this kind, *viz.* Prophecy, Miracles, and the wonderful Success of the Christian Religion, and the Preservation of it under the most Potent Opposition, and greatest Discouragements.

(1.) Prophecy. That is of it self a Revelation; and as it is what all Nations, as well Learned as Barbarous, have acknowledged; so being an Instance of Revelation, it is a good Proof of that Revelation which it doth accompany, and is interwoven with. And this is the case before us; for the Scripture being composed of matters of a different kind, cannot have the same sort of Evidence: But Prophecy being self-evident (when the Event has apparently answer'd the Prediction) and a Supernatural Evidence, is a good Proof to what has no such Evidence; and which for the sake of that Proof is as much a Matter of Faith, and as credible, as the Prophecy it self; because such a Testimony being a Testimony from God, cannot be applied to the support of a Falshood. So that where there is Prophecy truly so, we may conclude that to be true, and to come from God, to which that Testimony is given; for if the Testimony be Divine, the Doctrine confirmed by it must be Divine also.

Cic. de Divin. l. 1.

In

In diſcourſing upon which, I premiſe,

1. That there is ſuch a thing as Prophecy; that things future have been predicted: *Tully* ſaith, *This all Nations have agreed in;* as has been aforeſaid.

2. That Prophecy is a good Teſtimony to what it is given (as I have proved already).

So that there is nothing remains, but to ſhew that the Revelation in Scripture hath had this Teſtimony.

And of this there are two ſorts, Near, or Remote. Of both which we have an Inſtance in the Prophet ſent to *Jeroboam*, 1 Kings 13. 2.

The Remote was, That a Child ſhould be born, *Joſiah* by name, about 330 years after, who ſhould burn mens bones upon that Altar. The Proximate (which we may otherwiſe call a Sign) was, That at that time *the altar ſhould be rent, and the aſhes poured out.* If the Remote had been alone, it would have had little influence upon them who were moſt nearly concerned; and therefore there needed ſome preſent Sign to verify it. But otherwiſe, the Remote is the ſtronger, eſpecially when at ſuch a vaſt diſtance of time, as ſhall render it impoſſible for Men or Angels to foreſee, or by any practices of theirs to accompliſh; when it depends upon Voluntary as Natural Agents, and is in the concluſion anſwered by a

Parallel

Parallel Event, it is to After-Ages a certain and indisputable Evidence.

To which if we add the Concurrence of both, when there is a Chain and Series of Prophecies near and remote, in a certain and continued order following each other, the first looking forward to others that are to succeed, and the latter having a retrospect to the former; there is no reasonable nor possible exception to be made against the matter thus testified, without excepting against the Testimony of Prophecy, contrary to the sense of all mankind.

As for Instance; if there be a Prophecy or Prophecies in several Ages, from which it plainly appears, that at such a precise time, in such an Age of the world, some Hundreds or Thousands of Years after, there should arise a certain Person, born at such a place, and in an extraordinary way, and descended from such and such Progenitors, who should come to reform Mankind; and in confirmation of his Doctrine, should perform many astonishing Acts, and do many supernatural Works; that at a certain time, and in a certain determined year, he should be put to death by his own Nation, and upon it that Nation should be captivated and destroyed, and the Countrey desolate; it is a Testimony not to be disproved.

And yet ſetting aſide the many Prophecies in Scripture relating to particular Perſons and Families, to the *Jews* and other Nations, I ſhall only inſtance in ſome of thoſe concerning our Saviour; and others of our Saviour's himſelf: The former of which will appear to be exactly parallel to the Caſe propoſed.

The firſt of theſe is the Prediction immediately after the Fall of *Adam*, and 4000 years before the actual Completion of it; That there ſhould be one born *of the ſeed of the woman*, and ſupernaturally *made* of her alone (as *Adam* was out of the Earth without a Woman) that ſhould *bruiſe the ſerpent's head*, who had *beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty*. Gen. 2. 14. Gal. 4. 4.

About 2000 years after which Prophecy, and ſo 2000 years before our Saviour, it was revealed to *Abraham*, That in his *Seed*, and by one who ſhould deſcend from him, *all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*; and which was afterward renewed to *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. Gal. 3. 16. Gen. 12, 3, &c.

Again; about 1700 years before Chriſt, it was propheſied by *Jacob*, That *Shiloh*, or the *Meſſiah*, ſhould deſcend from his Son *Judah*. Gen 49. 8.

About 1000 years before our Saviour's Birth, *David* was exalted to the Throne, of whoſe Family the *Meſſiah* was to be a *Branch*; whence it

Matth. 22. 42. was that he was commonly known among the *Jews*, by the Character of *David's Son*.

In the ſame Royal Prophet have we the Prediction of our Saviour's Death, Reſurrection, and Glorification; and in very minute Circumſtances, as to the firſt of theſe, *Vid.* Pſal. 16. 10. 22. 1, 7, 8, 14, 16, 18. 110, *&c.*

This is alſo the great Theme of *Iſaiah's* Prophecy, 700 years before the Accompliſhment, That there ſhould be *a root out of Jeſſe*, the *Meſſiah*, who ſhould dye for the Sins of the People, be rejected by his own Nation, but be believed in by the *Gentiles*. Iſa. 11. 10. 42. 10, *&c.* 53.

In the ſame Age lived *Micah*, who foretells Mic. 5. 2. the very Place he ſhould be born in, *viz. Bethlehem-Ephrata*.

Laſtly; About 500 years before our Lord's Incarnation, *Daniel* directly points to the Time Dan. 9. 24, *&c.* and the Year the *Meſſiah* ſhould ſuffer in, which was to be in the midſt of the Seventieth Prophe- Lev. 25. 8. tical Week, (each of which conſiſts of Seven Years) that is, the 490th. Year, from the Decree of *Artaxerxes* for the Rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*. As may eaſily be computed by *Ptolomy's* Canon, and reckoning the Years backward from the Death of our Saviour, (which was in the Reign of *Tiberius*) to ſome fixed year of *Artaxerxes*.

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In consequence of which, the City and Sanctuary were to be destroyed, and the whole Countrey laid desolate, as with a *Flood*.

This Conclusion leads us on to the Second Branch of Prophetical Observations, *viz.* our Saviour's own Predictions, which are very many; but a most remarkable one is his Prophecy of the Destruction of that People, City, and Countrey, foretold by *Daniel* as to the very time; and which our Saviour describes so particularly, as if he had it at that instant before his eyes, when he discoursed of it to his Disciples.

There he foretells, * The preceding Signs, as Famines, and fearful Sights, *&c.* * That many False Prophets should arise. * That there should be barbarous Slaughters one of another, * That *Jerusalem* should be closely besieged; but withal, that at that time there should be an opportunity for escaping; which he advises them to take, and to fly to the Mountains for present security. * That the Enemy should at last cast a Trench about it, and keep them that remained in on every side. * That he should finally take the City, and lay it even with the ground; and that not one stone of the stately Structure, the Temple, (which they then were admiring) should be left upon another. * That the surviving

viving *Jews* ſhould be led Captive into all Nations, and never return again to that Land as Proprietors. * And that all this was becauſe they knew not the time of their viſitation, * And that this ſhould happen in that very Age.

Never was any Prophecy more expreſs, never any Sentence more terrible, nor more punctually fulfilled, as to all the Particulars before-recited; and for which we may appeal to *Joſephus* the *Jew*, who was an Eye-witneſs of all, and as exactly deſcribes it as to thoſe Inſtances, as if he was writing a Comment upon our Saviour's Prophecy. *Joſeph. de Bell.* l. 4, 5, 6, 7.

And accordingly, as the Temple, though attempted by *Julian* the Apoſtate's Order, never could be built, (as the Heathen Hiſtorian *Ammianus Marcellinus* relates, *Hiſt.* l. 23.) ſo that People to this day remain Vagabonds, without any certain place, diſperſed over the world.

Having traced this Subject thus far, we may proceed.

2. Another way by which we prove the Claim that the Matter of Scripture hath to a Divine Authority, is Miracles; of which kind there is nothing wanting that can reaſonably be deſired; and that either as to the *Judaical*, or *Chriſtian* Diſpenſation.

As

As for Inſtance: If a Perſon ſhould pretend that he comes from God with a Revelation, and which he requires us to hearken to, on peril of Damnation: What Satisfaction ſhould we deſire?

Surely if the Doctrine he teaches be in it ſelf credible, and worthy of God, and what in the nature and tendency of it proves to be uſeful and beneficial to Mankind, we have as much Evidence as the nature of the thing will bear. And farther, if the Perſon upon whom we are to rely, doth openly and in the ſight of all, even of Enemies that watch him, as well as Friends, and in the moſt Publick Aſſemblies, cure all manner of Diſeaſes, though naturally incurable, by a Word, or a Touch, and even at a diſtance. If he commands the Winds and the Seas, the Good and the Evil Angels, feeds Thouſands in a Deſart with no more than what would ſatisfy a few, and raiſes the Dead. If he tells the moſt ſecret Thoughts, Inclinations, and Practices of his Enemies as well as Followers. Laſtly, If when himſelf is put to a violent Death, he in a few days, according to his own Prediction, riſes again, appears to, and converſes with thoſe that knew him when alive, and ſaw him dead: And afterwards in the view of many aſcends bodily into Heaven; and within a few days, as a farther

ther Teſtimony of his former Miſſion and preſent Glorification, confers the ſame or like Power upon his Diſciples: Who can reaſonably doubt of the Truth of what he has taught?

I need not here draw the Parallel.

And if the Queſtion ſhould be put, as it was by thoſe whom *John* the *Baptiſt* ſent, *Art thou he that ſhould come?* Our Saviour's Anſwer will ſerve for one here, *Tell John what things ye have heard and ſeen, how that the blind ſee,* &c. *Luke* 7. 19.

There needs no greater Evidence to convince Mankind.

3. Another Proof of the Divine Authority of the Matter of Scripture, is the Event and Succeſs, correſpondent to former Predictions. Such was that of the *Iſraelites* in *Canaan*: And much more, the wonderful and aſtoniſhing Progreſs of the Goſpel, without any of that Aſſiſtance and Force which that People had, and when it had the Force of Emperors and Kings to oppoſe it.

Could it be thought poſſible, that a few ſimple and timerous Perſons, who had been bred up to a mean Employment, and had never been out of their own Country, ſhould each by himſelf undertake perilous and remote Journeys, among People they had no knowledge of, and to whoſe Tempers,

Tempers, Cuſtoms, and Language, they were altogether ſtrangers; and ſhould prevail with them to change their gods and their Religion, their Cuſtoms and their Lives?

Could it be thought that Men of no Authority nor Intereſt, of no Learning, Depth of Judgment, nor Subtilty in Arguing, ſhould be able to maintain and propagate a Doctrine that ſeemed to be fooliſh and abſurd, a Doctrine of a Crucified Saviour, a Doctrine oppoſite to the ſenſual Inclinations and Intereſts of Mankind, (as the ſtate of the world then was) a Doctrine that obliged them that believed it, to profeſs it with the Hazard of all that was dear to them in this world, and upon no other Encouragement than a Reward in another?

And yet even this Doctrine, ſo meanly attended, became ſo ſucceſsful, that according to our Saviour's Prediction, *Matth.* 24. 14. before the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and within Forty years after his Death, *the ſound of it went out into all the earth*, Rom. 10. 18. Not to proceed further in this Argument than Scripture; In thoſe early times we find Converts, if not Churches, in the moſt frequented Cities for Trade, Learning, and Dominion; in *Corinth* and *Epheſus*, *Athens* and *Rome*; in the Courts of Princes, even of a *Herod*

rod and a *Nero*: *Acts* 13. 3. *Phil.* 4. 22. And where not?

Now if there had not been Truth in the Doctrine; If it had not been a Doctrine worthy of God, suitable to the Desires and Expectations of Mankind; If it had not had a Supernatural Evidence and Testimony, and an Assistance as great as its Evidence, it could not in those Circumstances have made its own way, nor have proved in the Event so powerful and successful. No, it was *God that chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty*: And it must be a Revelation from him alone, that had all these Testimonies on its side to confirm it. So that we may conclude as we began, That if ever there was a Revelation, the Revelation contained in Scripture is a Revelation, and the only True Revelation now in the World.

And if so it be, then what an Obligation is there upon us to observe it? When 'tis *God speaking* to us, *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard* from him, *lest at any time we should let them slip*, Heb. 2. 1. *FINIS.*

ERRATA.

In the License to this Sermon, for May 1. *read* May 4.
P. 10. l. 5. *r.* Good-will. P. 12. l. 3. *after* God *put a* (;)

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